

## 10,000 Lazy Husbands In New York City Are Supported by Wives

Half of These Are Men Who Married Rich  
Girls to Escape Work, Says Mrs.  
Clarence Burns.

By Marguerite Mooers Marshall.  
Have you a lazy husband in your  
home?

If you have, console yourself with the  
thought that you are one of Ten Thou-  
sands! For, according to Mrs. Clarence  
Burns, President of the Little Mothers'  
Aid Association, that figure is a con-  
servative estimate of the number of  
New York men who are supported by  
their wives.

I had gone to Mrs. Burns, who, in  
her capacity of practical philanthro-  
pist, has studied all sorts of domestic  
situations for the last twenty years,  
with a despatch from Chicago concern-  
ing that city's troubles with the home  
where "everybody works but father."  
In the new Court of Domestic Rela-  
tions a change in the law relating to  
wife abandonment will be recommended.  
"One section of the present statute,"  
according to a prominent Chicago  
judge, "now reads, 'abandonment and  
failure to support his wife.' We would  
have that altered to read, 'abandonment  
only to support his wife.' For many of  
these men fail to support their wives  
and still hang around. Many of the  
wives would be glad if they did aban-  
don them."

Greatest Domestic Difficulty.  
"The greatest domestic difficulty  
here," Mrs. Burns agreed, promptly,  
"is the lazy husband, who does  
nothing but cling to his wife's  
skirts, because, apparently, the law  
cannot touch him."

"If he is unfaithful his wife can  
divorce him. If he formally abandons  
her or is cruel to her she can at least  
obtain a legal separation and sue him  
for non-support. But the leech type,  
the man who is always looking for  
work and wouldn't take it if it were  
offered to him, who sticks continually  
in the shadow of his wife's washboard,  
is an unimpeachable degenerate."  
"There are twenty thousand women  
in New York who, for one reason or  
another, are supporting their families.  
Many of these are widows. In many  
other cases the husbands have left  
home and abandoned their wives al-  
together."

"But I should say that in at  
least ten thousand families the  
husband was wholly or entirely  
supported at the expense of his  
wife."

"And," Mrs. Burns added significantly,  
"all these ten thousand instances are  
not to be found among the poor."

Five Thousand Have Rich Wives.  
"I should estimate that rather more  
than half of the lazy husbands are men  
who have married rich girls, with the  
politics well but perfectly understood  
assumption that they, the men, were to  
be taken care of for the rest of their  
lives. In fact, the difference between  
the rich and the poor after lies  
just here."

"The man who marries a wealthy  
woman does so with the conscious,  
deliberate idea of being supported!  
The poor man is much more apt to  
become a parasite on his wife's  
resources of circumstances."

"He probably has a good enough job  
when he marries, and for some time  
after. Then when perhaps two or three  
children have come, he is laid off by his  
employer. He doesn't vow on the spot  
never to take another job. In fact, he  
begins quite anxious to look for one.  
But very likely circumstances are tem-  
porarily against him. His wife finds  
that they are getting in debt and thinks  
that John has always been a good pro-  
vider and that she'll help things out by  
doing a bit of work. She can't break up  
the home and go into service, but she  
can do washing or scrubbing or any  
work that only takes her out by the

day. She never has any trouble in get-  
ting such jobs if she is really in earnest;  
the supply of scrubwomen is invariably  
less than the demand.

Thinks It's Temporary.  
"She begins with the conviction that  
she is merely the makeshift wage-  
earner for John who will soon get a 'real  
job.' Meanwhile he stays at home, at  
first to mind the children and help with  
the housework. He finds it warm and  
comfortable, and the idea of taking a  
job grows more hazy. His wife begins  
to fret because he has no work, and so  
he keeps even helping around the house  
and takes to the street corners, possibly  
the station. Perhaps, in despair, his  
wife actually secures him work, through  
some friend or relative of hers. But he  
only takes it with the secret determina-  
tion to drop it as soon as possible. In  
a day or two he comes in with some  
tale of the foreman's having ill-treated  
him, or of the hours being too long, and  
then his support is again up to his wife.  
That's the whole story."

"But why does the woman do it?" I  
questioned. "Why doesn't she push him  
out like a drone from the hive?"

The Problem.  
"Ah! there you have the psychology  
of it," answered Mrs. Burns, with a  
wise nod.

"The average woman would rather  
support her husband in their  
home than have him leave it. She  
will feed him, clothe him, give him  
tobacco and beer money, virtually  
pay him a salary for the privilege  
of his company before she will dis-  
miss him. And every day of  
her life she will tell him that she  
wishes she'd never seen him."

"It is a degrading situation for both  
husband and wife, but it is worst of  
all for the children. Not only are they  
skipped and stunted materially, for the  
mother's wages seldom equal those  
which the father could earn if he would,  
but the example is thoroughly perni-  
cious."

"But don't growing children ever make  
the husband and father ashamed of his  
dependence?"  
"That is always the wife's secret  
hope," admitted Mrs. Burns. "She  
thinks when Charlie enters the gram-  
mar school, or Mollie brings home a  
prize for sewing, or even when the  
youngest of the brood arrives, that at  
last father will 'spunk up' and get a  
job. But laziness is a cumulative pos-  
sion. When one has followed the line  
of least resistance for a certain time one  
becomes very nearly incapacitated to  
walk on any other."

A Modern Development.  
"The lazy husband in such large num-  
bers is a comparatively modern develop-  
ment. Before people began to crowd to-  
gether in the large cities it was much  
more difficult for the average unskilled  
woman worker to obtain paying occu-  
pation outside her own kitchen. It wasn't  
a choice between mother's pay-envelope  
and father's. It was a choice between  
his and near starvation. The tempta-  
tion to graft on his wife was non-exist-  
ent."

"But don't you believe in a woman's  
working outside her home after mar-  
riage?"  
"I think she should be extremely  
careful in entering upon such work,"  
said Mrs. Burns, slowly. "Of course  
sometimes it is right and necessary;  
sometimes it is advisable; sometimes it  
is definitely interesting and pleasurable,  
but the flower of a man's self-respect  
is a very fine and delicate thing, and a  
woman should think twice before she  
disturbs it by usurping any of the laws  
of its being—such as the law that it  
is the place of the male to care for  
his mate and her children."

Farms for Lazy Husbands.  
I asked Mrs. Burns how she would  
secure the lazy husband's "finis."  
"I would have the State provide big  
farms and factories," she said, "where  
men who can work and won't work  
should be made to work. Out of their

## SUGAR TRUST'S OFFER TO SETTLE MAY BE REFUSED

Government Now in a Position  
to Dictate Terms in the  
"Drawback" Frauds.

WASHINGTON, Dec. 28.—Recent dis-  
closures in the "drawback" frauds  
against the Government have put the  
Treasury Department in a position  
practically to dictate the terms of com-  
promise with sugar refining companies.  
The American Sugar Refining Com-  
pany's recent offer of \$700,000 may not  
be accepted in view of the fact that  
the Government is said to have evidence  
to compel the return of not less than  
\$1,000,000.

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recent conference with Attorney-Gen-  
eral Wickersham attorneys for the sug-  
ar company offered \$500,000 in settle-  
ment and declared that that "was the  
last cent."

The offer was declined and the \$700,000  
one came on soon after. One official of  
the sugar company offered \$200,000 in settle-  
ment and declared that that "was the  
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It has just become known that at a  
recent conference with Attorney-Gen-  
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